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AUTHOR Katchen, Johanna E.
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ABSTRACT

Two studies investigated what instructional issues may be involved when second-language television recordings with first-language subtitles are used in the second-language classroom. The experiments were conducted in an English-as-a-Second-Language class in advanced listening for native Chinese-speakers. In the first experiment, conducted at mid-term, 14 students watched British mysteries, subtitled in Chinese, and summarized them, transcribed a portion word-for-word, commented on the utility or hindrance of subtitles, and commented on their own listening ability with regard to the program. In the second experiment, conducted as a final project, ten of the students were given recordings of "X-Files" programs in English with Chinese subtitles and asked to perform the same tasks. Results indicate that: (1) most technical and semi-technical vocabulary can be accessed through subtitles; (2) idioms, slang, and culture-specific referents were more difficult to comprehend; and (3) perfect tenses and subjunctive forms, already difficult for the students, were often contracted in conversations and difficult to understand. Students with good listening skills found subtitles slowed their progress, but did benefit from them. Students with lesser listening skills depended more on subtitles. Some found errors in the subtitles. (MSE)

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ED 421 873

# First Language Subtitles: Help or Hindrance?

*Paper presented at the 22nd Annual JALT International Conference*
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Johanna E. Katchen
National Tsing Hua University
katchen@FL.nthu.edu.tw

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years satellite and cable television has become more widespread in East Asia. This trend has resulted in more stations from abroad and more local stations. Many of the programs are from the United States for obvious reasons: the productivity of Hollywood over the past several decades and the successful marketing strategies of US-based cable TV companies in Asia. Moreover, in places such as Taiwan, the local TV and film industries are just too small to produce a high number of high quality programs.

In Taiwan, things American, including films, are popular. However, even though English is a required subject in the schools and has been for a number of years, for most high school graduates, their level is not nearly high enough to comprehend English films or TV shows without assistance. Therefore, in order to please the audience, and to gain a wider audience, Chinese subtitles are added in most cases. For the EFL teacher, subtitling is far better than dubbing: at least we can hear the target language.

Programs with target language subtitles, such as English closed captioning, have been shown to be useful for both first and second language learning (e.g., Vanderplank, 1991). The first language, however, is prohibited by many practitioners, particularly in ESL, although in EFL contexts it may be neither practical nor necessary to use the target language exclusively (e.g., Robb, 1989). Moreover, it has long been assumed that we should avoid programs with first language subtitles when using video because it is easier for all of us to read in our native language rather than listen in a foreign one we have a poor command of, especially when we want to follow the story. While this assumption may hold in general, students at more advanced levels students might benefit from comparison and analysis of the original English and the native language translation.

With so many English programs with Chinese subtitles coming into students' living rooms every day, we began to wonder whether those subtitles could be used to aid student learning of English. This project represents a preliminary attempt to discover just what sorts of issues and questions may be involved when intermediate to advanced EFL students attend to both the spoken English and written Chinese, whether the Chinese can help them advance their English abilities, and whether any of these ideas can be applied to our classroom teaching of listening skills.

The Advanced Listening class--first semester--was chosen as the most appropriate for conducting this research. It is an elective course for third and fourth year students majoring in English at National Tsing Hua University. Video materials are used throughout the course to help students find ways to improve their listening outside of class. Furthermore, within the Advanced Listening class, it was necessary to give students some sort of outside project. In-class listening

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tests reveal students' current ability, and language abilities do not improve rapidly despite student effort. With an assignment in which students could exhibit both listening ability and serious effort, we felt they would be more motivated to complete it and grading would be fairer. More importantly, students should be able to learn something and believe they learned something from completing the assignment.

There was another reason for conducting the research as part of a class requirement. Working with subtitles entails a lot of time and work from subjects; paying students at a fixed rate for a limited amount of time might not entice them to put forth their best efforts, and an experimental setting might not produce the most natural results. If the students were given an assignment as part of the requirements of a course, however, and in which they could work at their own pace on their own time, we felt students would put forth more of an effort and show more of their true ability. That is, students in general believe that more work on their part may result in a greater reward--a higher grade.

## THE FIRST EXPERIMENT

### Background and Methodology

A good source of English programs is STAR-*plus* (later renamed STAR World), one of five stations we can receive in Taiwan from Hong Kong's STAR-TV network. All the programs are in English from American, British, or Australian sources. For several months in 1995-96 about half of these programs were subtitled in Chinese; thereafter, subtitling was abandoned.

Taiwan's students are taught the American English variety and sometimes express dissatisfaction when asked to listen to British English. This attitude is not very practical, because if they go abroad, they will be exposed to all varieties of English, and even if they stay in Taiwan and use English in their future employment, they will need to comprehend the British varieties spoken by the many Europeans who visit and work in Taiwan.

The British murder mystery is a well-loved genre. These are shown on STAR-*plus*, are in British English, and although they are about murder, there is little or no violence shown. Solving the puzzle from the many clues is most important, so language is critical to understanding.

The *Inspector Morse* and Inspector Wexford stories from *The Ruth Rendell Mysteries* were chosen for another reason: the author is fond of the genre and videotaped several episodes for personal enjoyment. The did not have enough episodes with Chinese subtitles of either program alone at the time but combined had enough for each student. Both series are similar enough to make little difference whether students had one or the other: the main protagonist is a middle-aged male detective with a younger assistant, there is a mix of standard and regional accents and social classes of Britain, and the time setting is from about 1985-1991.

There were fourteen students enrolled in the Advanced Listening class: five seniors, four juniors, one sophomore, and four freshmen (these were so-called "intelligent" track students who obtained university entry by special examination and who were recommended to take this class in place of the regular freshman listening class). Except for three of the seniors, all students were majoring in English.

For an out-of-class midterm project, each student had been given a copy of an episode from either *Inspector Morse* or *The Ruth Rendell Mysteries--Inspector Wexford* spoken in the original British English varieties and subtitled in Chinese. Each episode ran about 100 minutes when the commercials were ignored. Students had 5 to 6 weeks to complete the project. They

had to (1) summarize the story, (2) transcribe a 5-minute portion of the video word-by-word, (3) comment on the helpfulness or hindrance of the subtitles (citing specific examples), and (4) comment on their own listening ability with regard to the program. Furthermore, one of the requirements of the Advanced Listening class was that students write a weekly listening journal (Katchen, 1996b) in which they reflected on their outside listening each week; thus students already had some practice in analyzing their own listening strategies and the characteristics of the material that affected their listening ability.

**Results and Discussion**

An initial complaint of several of the students was about the British English. As one said "It didn't sound what it should be. Therefore, even if I know the word, I still can't recognize it." However, they also reported that they gradually got used to the British accents and the Chinese subtitles were of great help. "This film was in British English that was even harder to understand, so we need the Chinese subtitles' help. I found I got improved every once more I listened, and I noticed something maybe skipped out by me at the last time. It's a sense of achievement. Finally I found the British English easier than I imagined--though I am not very good at English." Another said of British English, "the accents are not the American we used to hear (vocabulary, intonation); the subtitles work then." "After several times, I gradually got used to the British accent. However, there were some sentences that the actors didn't speak clearly. In my opinion, they sounded more closely to murmuring than speaking." One student observed differences in vowel sounds between British and American, another learned the English pronunciation "can, can't, transport", while yet another heard differences between Inspector Morse's more standard and his sergeant's regional accents.

If our EFL students are to use the L1 subtitles they see on TV every day to improve their English, then the role of the translator is crucial. Good translations helped students learn words and phrases like *cock-and-bull story*, which was gleaned from the Chinese subtitle expression "talking nonsense". The same student also reported learning *engage* "to get someone interested in" and *excommunication*.

From another student, "*You couldn't have first call on his time*. As I see the sentence, I can understand every word in it. But I still can't figure out the whole meaning. After I read the Chinese translation, I realize it means her husband can't come to her side immediately whenever she needs him. Also at first I don't know how to spell *adultery*. But after I saw the Chinese meaning, I check it up in a Chinese-English dictionary. I got one more new word!"

Another student reported "...the sentence *I don't buy it*. Generally speaking it means 'I am not going to purchase it.' But I saw the Chinese subtitles say 'I don't believe it' then I realize this sentence can show another meaning."

In one episode (Wexford, *Achilles' Heel*), the characters were visiting a historical site, and the student was helped greatly by the Chinese subtitles to find the English terms *Vandals, Goths, Saracens, Genoese*, reporting "I had to use big dictionaries to find them." Another student had an episode (Morse, *Day of the Devil*) in which the occult played a role and had difficulty with related terms and their spelling could not access the word *occult* nor the word "*infirmary* (but the man is in jail)...Even if I were a native speaker, I thought that I also could not comprehend the causality at once."

Students' reactions to subtitles were mixed. From one student: "The Chinese subtitles would give me a certain direction to guess". However, another said, "In short, to me, I prefer to watch TV without the subtitles. Because according to my listening ability, I think I can understand 80% of the programs without subtitles. However, if the subtitles are available, then I may rely on the subtitles.

Thus I will never improve my listening ability."

An interesting suggestion from another student: "We had almost learned the conversations and stories by heart, but in Chinese. I think it impeded my natural learning to some extent, though it did help much. Every time I wanted myself to think in English, the Chinese subtitles came to mind first. Maybe we should look at the film without Chinese first, then try to find the words we still don't know by watching the English subtitles."

Yet another problem: "I would transfer my attention to the subtitles to check whether I am right or wrong. A big distraction I think. The reason why I understand more English from the radio than from the screen lies in Chinese subtitles, more or less." Another complained that sometimes the subtitles appeared after speech and it was hard to focus on both at the same time.

One student, though describing herself, summarized the experiences of several of the students: "subtitles help with individual words or sometimes passages, but not for overall content".

There were a few more specific criticisms about the subtitles. On student mentioned that some interjections, such as *bloody hell!* and *heavens!* were not translated at all. Another was unhappy with translating *Got time for a bath before supper, haven't I?* as "Wo keyi syan chyu syi dzau ba?" That same student, however, also commented on some excellent idiomatic translations, such as *What exactly happens at these things?* rendered by the Chinese "Tamen lai jeli dzwo shemma?"

Another positive comment on the Chinese translations concerned a sociolinguistic observation (Wexford, *An Unkindness of Ravens*): "Teenage girls like Helen and Sara talk more casually, whereas adults like Joey Williams and Inspector Wexford use more formal language. The Chinese subtitles are able to show such differences, which I find to be its major accomplishment."

For this assignment, only one student commented on male/female speech: "I discovered that every woman in the film spoke better than men--they were clearer and their pronunciations closer to standard. That's pretty interesting."

In general, students reported the usefulness of Chinese subtitles as giving them a direction to guess. As one student observed, "Because it is a mystery movie, and there are many details for us to notice, and those details are always the key points for finding out the clues of the mystery... Maybe in some ordinary movies, Chinese subtitles will not be so important, and we can get the main ideas by ourselves. Like romantic movies, we may usually get the correct information without knowing the details."

In the Wexford and Morse stories, there is a main plot and one or two subplots. One student thought that even if she were a native speaker, she would have trouble following it all the first time. It is her teacher's experience that her observation is correct; in such stories, the native speaker misses many details and perhaps some important points, especially if she is not paying close attention for the whole two hours. How much more difficult it is then for the nonnative speaker? The videocassette player and recorder is useful for native and nonnative speaker alike.

Not all comments concerned difficulties. One student, who was given Inspector Morse in *Cherubim and Seraphim*, enjoyed the portrayal of the relationship between Morse and his Sergeant Lewis and their humorous moments, such as when Lewis, the Oxford man, corrects Lewis' grammar--*Morse: Too frightened...Lewis: What of? Morse: Of what, Lewis. Of what? ...loosing control, I think.*

## THE SECOND EXPERIMENT

### Background and Methodology

*The X-Files*, a US television series about a pair of FBI agents who investigate cases of paranormal activity--UFOs and other strange phenomena, is extremely popular with university students in Taiwan. Dormitory TV lounges are crowded three times a week, when the show is broadcast 1) dubbed in Mandarin (STAR-TV's *Chinese Channel*), 2) subtitled in Mandarin (Taiwan's *CTS*); 3) without subtitles (STAR-TV's *STAR-plus*, formerly shown with Mandarin subtitles). Because of the popularity of the program with our students and at their request, it was decided to use episodes of this series for the final project for the Advanced Listening course.

Ten of the students from the same Advanced Listening class who had participated in the first (midterm) experiment were each given an episode of *The X-Files* spoken in the original English version with Chinese subtitles (the four other students in the class chose other programs for their projects). Six episodes were used, so some students worked on the same episodes. The particular episodes were chosen in a fairly simple manner: the instructor merely videotaped six consecutive weekly episodes from STAR-*plus* (the sound quality of the three Taiwan stations on the instructor's TV set is somewhat strange so recordings from this source were not used). After that time STAR-*plus* stopped providing Chinese subtitles and the time to assign the final project was fast approaching, so it was decided to use only those six episodes. Students had to again (1) summarize the story; (2) take a five-minute segment and transcribe the English word by word; (3) comment on the strategies and techniques they used in transcribing, including how they used the Chinese subtitles to figure out the English words; and (4) comment on their listening ability with regard to the video. They had 4 - 5 weeks to complete the project outside of class.

### Results and Discussion

For this second outside assignment, students wrote more comments than they did for the midterm assignment, most likely because their teacher asked them to. That is, since they had already completed this type of assignment before, many were probably motivated to write more according to the teacher's suggestions in order to improve their grades (all grades were above 70 for the first assignment, with some above 80). While some students got the same episodes to analyze, there seemed to be no collusion among them; nevertheless, results of collaboration on transcriptions might also prove enlightening. Some students reported asking roommates or classmates about certain words or phrases; such group problem solving is admirable and expands learning.

The area students commented upon the most was vocabulary. Of the six episodes we used, topics included cloning, the discovery of a dangerous new life form in the arctic, a fallen UFO, extra sensory perception, a stranded space shuttle, and a computer with an evil mind of its own. Thus words from medical, scientific, and technological fields that students had never encountered before were often crucial to comprehension. One of the students who used the space shuttle episode reported learning the following new words: *orbit, payload, transmission, launching pad, trajectory, silicon, sabotage, titanium*, and other words. Another student who had the episode about the discovery of a new life form reported learning *rabies, gland, plague, parasite, Alaska, arctic core, ice sheet, expendable, psychological make-up, geologist, mittens, credentials, toxin, biologist, ammonia.* He said, "With Chinese subtitles, I can check the words into English diction-

ary. Without it, although I can get the main idea of the play, I still can't learn the specific words and [instead] let them pass."

Students realized it would have been impossible for them to learn these words and difficult for them to comprehend the program without the aid of Chinese subtitles. When doing the transcription, students' usual procedure was to compare the Chinese with the English they heard and write down the English words. When they came to an English word they did not understand or could not translate from the Chinese into an English word that sounded like what they heard, then they consulted Chinese-English dictionaries. This strategy was generally effective for moderately technical terms like *chromosome* but broke down in others, perhaps in some cases because of the limitations of some dictionaries. For example, one student had a problem finding *digitalis*; she had found *foxglove* but she knew it did not have the proper sounds. Only when she consulted an English-English dictionary did she locate *digitalis*. Another student reported the following example: "[When] Mulder advises Scully not to believe Boggs, he says 'The bureau will expect something like that spook Mulder but not Dana Scully.' In the Chinese subtitles, it translates FBI but Mulder speaks /b.../ or /p.../ instead of 'f,b,i'. So, I check it in the dictionary and then get the answer 'bureau', which means a government department of office. Besides, 'spook' means 'strange person', and then I look up (spu...) and (spo...) in the dictionary and find out its spelling."

A bigger problem for students came with idiomatic or slang expressions because the translator interpreted the meaning of the terms rather than giving a senseless word by word translation. One student said of the translator "Although I admire his great skill, I still hate him because he doesn't translate the sentences according to every word and I cannot follow the subtitle to find the correct words." Another student with a higher level of listening ability felt that sometimes an idiomatic Chinese translation was helpful; for example, she knew each English word of *I don't want to drop the ball on this one* but only understood the real meaning from the Chinese, which was translated to mean "I don't want to lose this good opportunity"". As with the first assignment, some of the better students found errors in the Chinese subtitles or suggested better translations.

Some students reported learning new English expressions: "In addition to those words, I learn some interesting sentences, too. A needle in a hay stack (to find a needle in a big ocean), so much for your boyhood hero, music to our ears, it's your only shot."

In some cases culture-specific referents or idioms could most effectively be translated into Chinese by meaning only, so students had no other recourse but to ask a native speaker. For example, referring to mass murder by poisoning, Agent Mulder says *Their own mini-Jonestown*. The Chinese translation meant 'mass murder' but the student knew it sounded different yet could not find any word sounding like Jonestown in dictionaries. That student was not old enough to remember the news story about the religious cult leader in Jonestown who persuaded several hundred of his followers to drink a lethal dose of poison. Moreover, even if she had heard of the incident, the relationship between the English place name *Jonestown* and the Mandarin version of it might not have jumped to the student's mind. In the same episode, a Chinese translation of 'criminal' was used for *America's most wanted* when a passing truck driver could not believe that two children were being pursued by the FBI and said *Yeah, and these are America's most wanted?*

Some of the students were not too careful in paying attention to what they heard, or perhaps they were not too persistent in seeking out the correct vocabulary. One student gave the term 'misobedience' for *insubordination*, 'has the right to' for *jurisdiction* and other such transcriptions that showed she got the meaning from the Chinese but could not possibly have heard them as correct (these students have no known hearing problems).

Another related problem has to do with those little grammar words and function morphemes. Sometimes these are almost impossible to hear, yet native speakers write them in even when they do not hear them because they know they have to be there to make the sentence grammatical. Our students for the most part do not hear them even when they are clearly articulated, especially contracted 'has, have, had' and then end up with ungrammatical transcriptions. The structure of Mandarin Chinese is such that relatively few grammatical morphemes are used; in this area Chinese subtitles are of little assistance. For example, nouns are not usually marked for plurality, though Mandarin has, of course, ways to indicate plurality when necessary. At the end of one episode we hear the final line *Always keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer.* The student wrote 'friends' and 'enemy' yet the Chinese did not mark plurality on either word. It is probable that the student chose the singular for 'enemy' because the previous conversation referred to Agent Mulder as dangerous to the Bureau, as some sort of enemy. However, had she paid closer attention to her ears and the clearly audible plural marker, she may have realized that the closing line of the episode referred not only to the specific Agent Mulder but to a more general proverb or truth.

Another student reported that two groups of words—words that sounded similar and grammar words--were troublesome but that she was nevertheless successful in transcribing them. "'I'm the mission control communication commander for the space shuttle program.' It took me lots of time to transcribe the sentence because *control, communication,* and *commander* are alliteration vocabularies which in my opinion store in my brain at the close areas and are easy to confuse. It's the same with *space* and *shuttle*. 'If anyone in NASA would take a look at that analysis, they would say it would be impossible for anyone to do that kind of damage undetected.' In this sentence, several common words repeat over and over again, such as *anyone, would, that*. This cause difficulties to correctly transcribe the lines because of the same reason as example one, however it is less harder to get listening comprehension.'

Some of the students made interesting observations about the language and voice quality; several mentioned they thought Agent Scully's voice (female) was clearer than or she enunciated better than Agent Mulder (male). "Scully has the most clear voice, and she is the easiest to understand. Maybe it's because she's a woman. As for Mulder, his voice is clear, too. However, I think he sometimes speaks like mumbling or murmuring, not opening his mouth wide enough." There was also mention of a female doctor and female reporter as easy to understand, possibly because of their professions, though for one episode a student mentioned she thought both male and female doctors spoke clearly because of their professions. "Apart from what I learn, I notice different pronunciations among different persons. The reporter in the beginning of the film and Michelle have the most understandable pronunciations. This reporter has characteristics of being a broadcaster. Likewise, Micela, who works as a communication commander, possesses the capability to spread her messages clearly. Listening to what they say is the best and quickest way to follow the story. The pronunciations are loud and clear. Their mouths are big and therefore looking at their mouths is another way to improve my pronunciation." While these observations are consistent with general sociolinguistic findings that women (and professionals) tend to use more standard forms, it should be noted that all these comments came from female students. The one male in the class thought that the male protagonist--Mulder--was easier to understand than the female characters.

## IMPLICATIONS

There is more of interest in these data than can be presented here. We can only speculate on the implications and pose new questions to pursue later in more detail. First, it seems most technical and semi-technical vocabulary can be accessed and learned through L1 subtitles. This brings us to an interesting paradox: while students mentioned that the most difficult aspect of using *The X-Files* was the technical vocabulary, this was the area for which the Chinese subtitles were most useful. This is not that hard to understand. A technical term in English would be translated into the equivalent technical term in Chinese, so provided the student had a good dictionary, she could access the exact word (*digitalis*) or one very close to it (*foxglove*). Thus it may be that programs on specific topic areas that do not require specialized knowledge (documentaries and other information programs come to mind) would be most useful for acquiring new English vocabulary through Chinese subtitles by means of self-study. One of the students who worked on the space shuttle episode said she had consulted an encyclopedia to learn more about the topic and the related vocabulary; her strategy was probably effective because her transcription was quite good. Another student reported going to the library to learn about 'parasitism' (the episode on the new life form).

Second, idioms, slang, and culture-specific referents were more difficult for students to comprehend, though students with higher levels of listening were able to access more. This may mean that popular genres such as the situation comedy would produce better learning with a classroom teacher and/or English closed captions (with a set of English subtitled episodes of *Three's Company* in the self-access language lab, students still had many questions about the meaning of slang expressions, idioms, and jokes).

Third, the question of hearing grammatical forms is a little different. Our university English majors still have difficulty in their compositions with perfect tenses and subjunctive forms, yet these are the forms which are so often contracted in conversations and so hard to hear. If students are not yet comfortable with where the forms should occur, how can they listen for them? On the other hand, can training in listening for these words where they are likely to occur motivate students to pay more attention to their occurrence and use and perhaps even carry over to other language skills?

Students with the best listening skills (from evaluations in this and other classes and from the low number of errors in their transcriptions) sometimes complained that L1 subtitles slowed them down. When watching a film on their own without a VCR and the possibility of repetition, they preferred the English only without subtitles and maintained they got enough of the English to enjoy the program, although some words or phrases might be lost. Nevertheless, they admitted that with the benefit of repetition and with L1 subtitles, they were able to fill in places they had missed at first viewing and they did learn some new words and phrases. The results were transcripts with only an occasional missing word. Students whose listening skills were not as high reported depending more on the L1 subtitles even to get the general idea of the story. Yet even with subtitles, their transcripts showed far more errors. This was true not only for new vocabulary items but also of quite common words and phrases.

Those students who were judged in this class and other classes to be better in English skills turned in transcriptions closer to the original. However, it may still be the case to some degree that some students put in more time and effort on the task and got better results; that is, they were more willing to listen again or to check another dictionary. In fact, as a student with one of the best transcriptions reported to her teacher when they met in the students' self-access language

laboratory while the student was working on her transcription, the student kept transcribing far more than the required five minutes because it was fun. But then if success breeds success, what can we do for a lower level student?

In past semesters, we have given a similar transcription assignment with videotapes which did not have Chinese subtitles (reported in Katchen, 1996a); with the experiment reported here, some students wondered how they would have done had they watched the program first without Chinese subtitles. We have since obtained a few programs both with and without Chinese subtitles; with these materials we may next be able to set a up a more strictly controlled comparison study.

In the end, what seems most important is that students reported learning something (new words, phrases, observations about language) from doing the assignment and that they gained self-confidence in their English skills when they could figure something out. One student commented in her paper "Frankly speaking, it's fun to find the mistakes in the Chinese subtitles, because you'll be proud that you're not depending on them and also show that you might do a better job." We hope that in the future some of them will.

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## APPENDIX

### Midterm Assignment/ Final Assignment

**Question: How can you use Chinese subtitles to help improve your English?**

**(for midterm project)** You have been given a videotape of a mystery movie that lasts about 2 hours with commercials. These films are from two popular series: *The Ruth Rendell Mysteries* with Inspector Wexford, and characters based on the character created by Colin Dexter, *Inspector Morse*. For your assignment you will do the following:

**(for final project)** You have again been given a videotape containing one episode of *The X-Files*. For your assignment you will do the following:

**(directions below the same for both midterm and final projects)**

1. Write a brief **summary**--about two pages (double-spaced), to let me know that you understood what the program was about.

2. Choose about a five-minute segment and write a word-by-word **transcription** (write down every word). This will naturally take up a few pages.

3. Write down your **reflections and comments**--at least two pages (double-spaced). Think of the following questions related to the use of the Chinese subtitles. How did you use them with regard to the main ideas? How did you use them to help with your transcription? To get the general idea of a sentence? To find a specific word? To check? Give specific examples. Did the Chinese subtitles help? In what way? Did they hinder (give you more problems)? In what way? What else did you discover? This should take at least two pages.

4. **Comment on your listening ability with regard to the video**. Were some speakers easy or hard to understand? Why? Did the character use a lot of slang? Have a strange voice? Speak rapidly? Was there lots of noise or other sounds? This should take at least one page.

5. This part is optional. You may also **critique** (point out the good and bad points of) the program itself. Was it a good or bad program with respect to its type? Why? Would it have been better if ...? What were its good points? Bad points?

Parts 3 and 4 are the most important, the most interesting, but you have to do Part 2 in order to do them. I really would like to know. In this part there can be no right or wrong answers. You will be graded on how much effort, how much thought, you put into doing the assignment.

**Possible Procedures for Completing the Assignment**

Here is one possible way to start doing this assignment.

1. Watch the whole film from beginning to end for fun and to see what happens. Read the Chinese subtitles if you feel like it.

2. Watch it a few more times to make sure you understand the story, who the characters are, etc. You might want to repeat certain parts. These stories often have subplots that are unrelated (or maybe in the end related) to other subplots, so even native speakers can get confused. You can write the summary of the story at this point.

3. As you do Step 2, take note of places that are easy, difficult, enjoyable, etc. because you may want to go back to them later. You may decide on the parts you will transcribe.

4. Make an audiotape of a portion of the film, especially parts you may want to transcribe. Some students record the whole story and listen when they have time. This may force you to pay more attention to the English.

5. Do your transcription from audiotape. Going back and forth and pausing frequently hurts both machine and tape. VCRs are more expensive than ordinary tape recorders. After each section you transcribe, you can go back to videotape to check. You will especially need the videotape to check the Chinese subtitles.

6. Don't leave the assignment until the last minute. Start on it as soon as possible because it will take a lot of time. You have 5 weeks, so do the summary the first week, the transcription the second and third weeks, write your comments the fourth week, then check it all the fifth week.